An Empirical Study on Work Life Balance

M. ANUSHA

MBA Final Year Student, Department of Management Studies, E.G.S. Pillay Engineering College, Nagapattinam, India.

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Work-life offset can be characterized as the ideal mix in the middle of work and life both not meddling with one another. In the current business world, individuals and associations are working round the clock to meet the constantly developing requests. A slight postpone in gathering the calendars or desires is thought to be an authoritative disappointment. To maintain a strategic distance from postponements and disappointments, representatives are buckling down and giving their complete self to attain work-life equalization which is making a gigantic weight on them and consequently they are compelled to complete their employments regardless of time cutoff. The frequently utilized expression among the workers is "I don't have time" or "I have a rushed calendar." A day of 24 hours is no sufficiently more to perform work-related and individual related obligations or obligations. The issue appears basic however hard to settle and handle. Workers who need to assume an alternate part of girl/child/mate/folks are not ready to deal with their parts. Watching the everyday lives of numerous workers, two fundamental issues to be tended to attain work-life equalization are time and anxiety. Dealing with these two variables is the mystery of an immaculate work-life offset. The HR division of the association ought to aid the worker to keep up a work-life equalization. The HR administrator should deliberately recognize the issue and discover an answer with the co-operation of the head honcho. Association must incorporate giving work-life adjust as a HR arrangement. This paper mostly concentrates on the conclusions of flawed work-life offset confronted in the regular life and the part of HR in accomplishing work-life parity.

INTRODUCTION

The changing economic conditions and social demands have changed the nature of work throughout the world. Originally, work was a matter of necessity and survival. Throughout the years, the role of "work" has evolved and the composition of the workforce has changed. Today, work is widely viewed as a source of personal satisfaction. A good balance in work and life can play a phenomenal role in the attainment of personal and professional goals. The objective of this paper is to understand the various issues that have come to the forefront due to the dynamic nature of work.

Work life balance is about people having measure of control over when, where and how they work. There is a view that work-life balance only in the framework of what the company does for the individual.

However, work-life balance is a two-pronged approach. The other prong of work-life balance, which many individuals overlook, relates to what individuals do for themselves. The core of work life balance could also be summed as achievement with enjoyment. If an individual goes on working his or her best at work place but not really enjoying the same then happiness and satisfaction can never be achieved. Achievement can be viewed as motive of life while enjoyment is the fuel that drives that motive.

While we strike a work life balance, we are not merely balancing our profession and family, we are also balancing our mental and status quo and thereby balancing our emotional intelligence, which is the worldly ability to manage us and to handle others. Organizations can help facilitate work-life balance for their employees through work-life programs and training.

1.1 Need and Benefits of Work Life Balance:

To understand the need of work life balance, one first needs to understand about work life imbalance, as with the understanding of the origin, causes and effects of this imbalance, the balancing act becomes easier. The corporate world of today is exceedingly demanding. The work culture varies from organization to organization.

1.2 Efforts Made by Organization & Individuals:

Organizations today have realized the importance of the employee-work-life balance and its importance in the efficiency of the employees. Organizations work-life balance, so that neither the work nor the employee's personal life work-life balances, so that neither the work nor the employee's personal life is affected.

ROLE OF HR IN ACHIEVING WORK – LIFE BALANCE

HR Managers therefore, need to take a strategic approach to the whole issue of work/life balance. They need to understand and quantify how work/life issues impact the bottom line measures of the business. They need to talk about work/life issues not as a 'soft option' but as an essential business tool that will deliver.

- A reduction in absenteeism
- An increased ability to attract and retain talented employees
- Increased 'employee engagement', motivation and use of discretionary effort
- Enhanced levels of customer service.

2.1 Why It's Important:

A healthy balance between work and home should be a priority for everyone. Implementing proper work-life balance offers many important benefits. There are, however, many hazards linked with an unbalanced work and home life.

2.2 Risks:

- **Poor Health:** Working long hours without taking time to relax will take its toll on health.
- **Unresolved Conflict:** A lack of balance can create conflicts at work and at home.
- **Poor Performance:** Taking on too much responsibility will lead to exhaustion and cause performance to suffer.
- **Financial Loss:** The impact on health and productivity takes a financial toll on both individual employees and organizations.

2.3 Benefits:

- **Fulfilment:** People who successfully implement work life balance improve their sense of fulfillment at work and at home
- **Health:** A healthy work life balance decreases the risk of heart disease and other health problems.
- **Greater Productivity:** Being relaxed and well rested increases productivity and improves work performance.
- **Stronger Relationships:** Personal and professional relationships are strengthened and conflicts are avoided when there is work life balance.

TIPS FOR WORK – LIFE

In today's busy world, prioritizing between your work and your personal life can be a huge challenge. But studies show that a poor work-life balance can result in unhealthy levels of stress, unhappiness, and even reduced productivity.

The 14 tips outlined in this article are designed to help you restore the balance -- and harmony – in your work and personal lives, so you can enjoy both to the utmost

Step 1: Set Your Priorities: Figure out what you want your priorities to be, not what you think they should be. Ask yourself, "If I could only focus on one thing in my life, what would it be?"

That answer is your top priority. What would you focus on second? Third? Fourth? Fifth? You've now identified your top five priorities.

Step 2: Track Your Time: For one week, track how you spend your time. How much time do you spend doing things that don't matter to you? Or that don't align with your priorities? Eliminate these things from your life, or delegate them.

Step 3: Concentrate on One Thing at a Time: Forget multi-tasking. It's not possible to focus on two things at the same time. Instead, devote your full attention to the task at hand. When you are working, work. When you are spending time with your family, focus solely on them

Step 4: Schedule one Thing You Look Forward to Each Day: Book some time to play tennis with a friend, go to an art museum, or have a massage. The activity doesn't have to be time-consuming, complicated, or expensive.

Step 5: Respect Your Private Time: An emergency would most likely have to come up before you'd reschedule an important work meeting. Give your own time the same respect. Once you've put private time on your schedule, protect it, unless there's an emergency.

Step 6: Take a Look at Your Personal Habits and General Lifestyle: Lack of sleep, poor nutrition, and bad exercise habits can cause you to feel a lack of balance in your life, and can counteract any efforts you are making to achieve work-life balance.

Step 7: Take a Vacation: At the very least, take two weeks off from work per year. You don't need to go far and you don't need to spend lots of money, but you do need to recharge your batteries in order to be the most productive, creative, and happy person possible. Turn off your cell phone and computer, and enjoy.

Step 8: Ask for Support: Tell your boss, family, friends, colleagues, and anyone else involved in your life that you are seeking a better work-life balance. Tell them what your plan is, and ask them to respect it.

Step 9: Hire a Personal Coach: A personal coach can assess your current work-life balance, and can tell you what you can do to achieve optimal balance.

Step 10: Get Plenty of Exercise: It may feel counterintuitive to add another activity to your life, but exercise relieves stress, clears your mind, and ultimately makes you more productive. Don't skip it. You'll find that you greet work, family, and personal commitments with renewed vigor.

Step 11: Set Boundaries: Today's technology can make the line between your work life and personal life quite blurry. Turn off your cell phone and laptop when you're at your son's soccer game, and ask friends and family not to interrupt your workday unless it's an emergency.

Step 12: Find a Mentor: Do you know someone who has it all -- a successful career and a terrific personal life? Ask him or her to give you advice on career development, setting priorities, and time management.

Step 13: Learn How to Say "No": Don't acquiesce to every request that.

Step 14: Evaluate Your Work-Life Balance on a Regular Basis: Achieving work-life balance is a never-ending journey, and your needs will be different at different times in your life. Set aside some time once every other month or so to reflect on your current balance, what you would like it to be, and what the plan is for arriving there. Comes your way. If it doesn't fit into your schedule or align with your priorities, don't overwhelm yourself by taking on more.

3.1 Five Tips for Better Work – Balance:

"A lot of people are having a more difficult time finding balance in their lives because there have been cutbacks or layoffs where they work. They're afraid it may happen to them, so they're putting in more hours," says psychologist Robert Brooks, PhD, co-author of The Power of Resilience: Achieving Balance, Confidence, and Personal Strength in Your Life. The 5 ways for a better work-life balance is as follows,
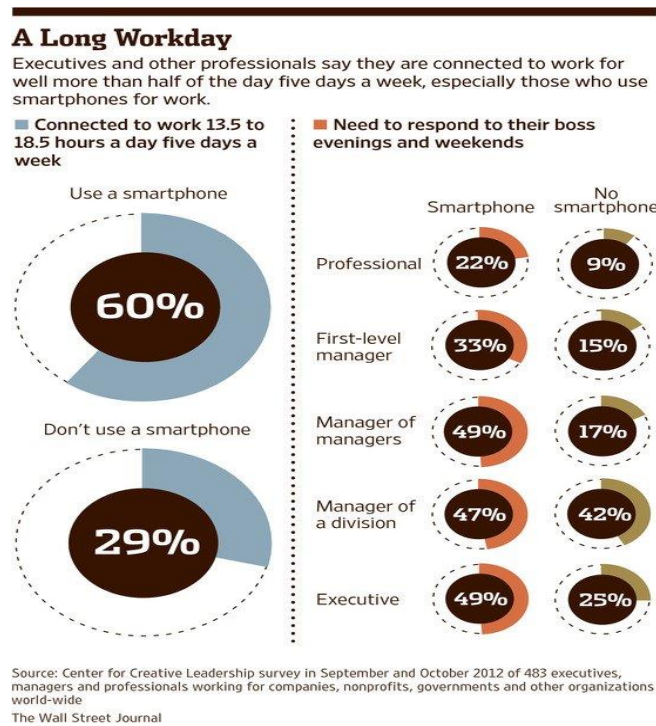
1. Build downtime into your schedule.

2. Drop activities that sap your time or energy.
3. Rethink your errands.
4. Get moving.
5. Remember that a little relaxation goes a long way

PART OF TECHNOLOGY IN WORK – LIFE BALANCE

Smartphones have made it more difficult than ever for people to separate their jobs from the rest of their lives. It doesn't have to be that way.

Smartphones have gone a long way toward making work a race to the bottom. Getty Images.

A Long Workday
Executives and other professionals say they are connected to work for well more than half of the day five days a week, especially those who use smartphones for work.

■ Connected to work 13.5 to 18.5 hours a day five days a week

■ Need to respond to their boss evenings and weekends

Use a smartphone

60%

Don't use a smartphone

29%

	Smartphone	No smartphone
Professional	22%	9%
First-level manager	33%	15%
Manager of managers	49%	17%
Manager of a division	47%	42%
Executive	49%	25%

Source: Center for Creative Leadership survey in September and October 2012 of 483 executives, managers and professionals working for companies, nonprofits, governments and other organizations world-wide
The Wall Street Journal

They're convenient. They let us work anywhere and anytime. But they also play on our anxieties and insecurities and leave us much more bound to work than we used to be.

My research shows that people use their smartphones so much outside of business hours—reading and responding to streams of messages from the office—that many end up putting in 13 hours or more a day. But they're not doing that extra work because they want to. They're doing it because they feel compelled to, and because the smartphone makes it so easy.

Want to show you're responsive and dedicated? The smartphone makes it seductively simple to answer emails immediately, at all hours. And because it's so easy, people start to worry if they don't respond to notes quickly all the time. Especially if their colleagues seem to be writing and replying more than they do.

Meanwhile, companies see this process at work and push it even further. They not only expect people to be available at all hours, they make it necessary by wasting people's time from 9 to 5—filling their days with endless meetings, for instance, or overflowing their inboxes with notes that take forever to sort through. Bosses figure: Why not? There's no limit to the amount of time people can continue working.

In short, Smartphone have gone a long way toward making work a race to the bottom. People's lives are more tied to work than ever, employee time has been devalued because it's no longer finite, and inefficiencies have spread uncontrollably throughout organizations.

Some businesses try to address these issues by exhorting employees to do things like triage their inbox more effectively, or turn off email after hours or when on vacation. But those fixes ignore the human factor—the anxiety that makes people feel they must keep in touch to protect their job or keep up with colleagues. A better approach is to use the same technology that complicates our lives to relieve the pressure we feel. (Think of it as sending a Terminator to stop another Terminator.) Here's how some simple fixes to Smartphone and software could curb their influence and make our lives a lot easier.
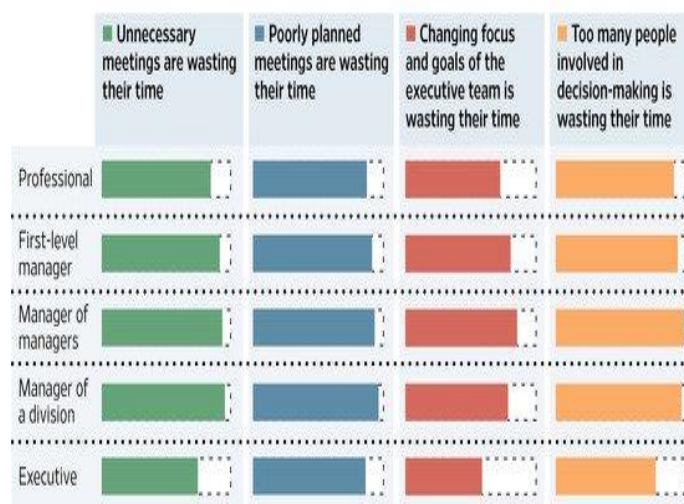
Everybody's inbox is cluttered with them: notes that are sent out to a dozen or more people followed by replies that copy everybody on that original note. While all dozen people may need to see the original note, it is rare that all dozen need to see every reply. Many Reply All are just political positioning, where people try to look good by agreeing with the sentiments in the original note, or grab a chance to mention their own projects.

The answer is to restrict the use of Reply All. Organizations could set a limit on the number of people Reply All will reach, and count all of the people in a distribution list individually, rather than counting the whole list as one person. Experts say in many cases this fix could be put in place by systems administrators, using the software we've got now.

But the Reply Alls are part of a bigger problem: Not all emails are equally urgent or even require a response. Even so, employees typically have to slog through each and every message to determine how important a note is and whether they need to answer it.

Wasting Time

Most executives and other professionals blame inefficiencies in their organizations for extending the amount of time they need to devote to work.

	Unnecessary meetings are wasting their time	Poorly planned meetings are wasting their time	Changing focus and goals of the executive team is wasting their time	Too many people involved in decision-making is wasting their time
Professional				
First-level manager				
Manager of managers				
Manager of a division				
Executive				

Source: Center for Creative Leadership survey in September and October 2012 of 483 executives, managers and professionals working for companies, nonprofits, governments and other organizations world-wide

The Wall Street Journal

Here, too, there's a solution available right now: Microsoft Outlook lets senders label an email as requiring a response, for your information or no response necessary (among others). Outlook also allows the sender to include a reminder specifying how quickly they

need a response. If emails were coded by the sender, the receiver could prioritize and respond to them more efficiently, thus saving time. Senders would have to be wary of exaggerating the priority of their emails—that is, saying something needs a fast reply when it doesn't—for fear of getting a boy-who-cried-wolf reputation.

Of course, simply telling people to label their notes might not do the trick. But a straightforward programming fix would take care of that, too, by requiring that the "priority" fields be filled in before an email is sent, similar to how an email can't be sent without an email address.

There's another advantage to coding emails: The system could also be set up to restrict email traffic to smart phones after hours, thus reducing the pressure people feel to respond. For example, the software could specify that only emails coded as "immediate response needed" or emails from specific addresses would be sent to the Smartphone after hours; all others would be waiting in the inbox until the employee next turns on the computer.

Thus we could address those issues that are truly urgent, and not be pulled away from our life by all of the other emails people send whenever they happen to think of something. On the other hand, people who get an idea after work hours and want to pass it along before they forget it don't have to worry about disturbing the recipient.

Another reason people latch on to their Smartphone's after hours is that they've spent all day in meetings and still have work they have to get done. Technology can help fight that, too: Organizations could use their calendaring systems—such as the ones built into Outlook—to automatically buffer time so work can get done during work hours.

For instance, set up the calendar so that employees simply couldn't be scheduled in more than five hours of meetings a day (something that could be done with a simple software fix, experts say). That means they would have three hours to get non-meeting work done, and deal with all of the odds and ends that they often spend their evenings cleaning up. People would then find ways of making meetings more efficient—or perhaps some meetings would be eliminated (gasp).

Another approach: The system could be programmed so meetings couldn't be scheduled during specific hours of the day, thus giving people time to catch up (or eat their lunch while getting work done).

Ultimately, of course, technology can't change the belief that we have to be hyper-responsive and always on. But just as technology currently enables our most desperate and insecure urges, we can turn the tables and use technology to protect us from acting on those urges and give us all a bit of relief. If our phones and software prevent some of the time-wasting things we do now, perhaps we can both be more productive and get back to living our lives more, while still retaining the option to work anywhere and anytime.

Anybody—especially at the top of the food chain—think that's worthwhile?

Helping employees balance work and non-work responsibilities has been a growing concern of corporations for more than twenty years. The interest in work-life balance issues began in the 1980s as more women entered the workplace and focused primarily on helping employees balance work and family responsibilities by offering family-friendly benefits. These practices are now aimed a work-life balance, which is a more encompassing term that reflects the desire of nearly every employee for more flexibility in their work in order to manage the competing demands of work and life outside of work.

While many employees enjoy the benefits of work-family balance practices, many were inspired by changes in the workforce over the last two decades. These changes include increases in the number of employed women, especially mothers, single-parent families, and dual-income families. Additionally, many employees are now responsible for caring for elderly parents and other relatives. Corporate interest in family-friendly practices has steadily escalated as companies have realized the advantages of providing work-life balance benefits.

CHANGING WORKFORCE AND GROWING CORPORATE INTEREST

A number of changes in workforce demographics have brought work-life balance issues to the attention of companies. The major change related to the need for family-friendly benefits is the number of women in the U.S. workforce, which has more than doubled since 1970. Additionally, more women are remaining in the workforce after marriage and after having children, increasing the number of dual-career households in America. Add to this a larger number of single women with children in the workforce in the past two decades, and there is increased demand for family-friendly work policies.

Although the trend toward work-life balance practices began with demands from mothers in the workforce, the push now is coming from all employees: fathers and mothers, single parents, and employees with responsibilities for caring for aged relatives, and even employees who just want more flexibility in their daily lives. Nine out of ten workers in America live in households with family members, and nearly half of all employees have care-giving responsibilities. Recognizing these changes, corporations are creating work environments that make it possible for employees to be both good workers and good caregivers. However, the corporate motive for work-life balance policies is more than altruism and a desire to help and support employees. Employers have realized that it makes good business sense to provide such benefits. It helps with recruitment and retention of employees by creating an atmosphere of loyalty to the corporation.

Programs and benefits that directly address work-life balance issues include:
- Dependent care (child-care and elder-care programs)
- Flexible or alternative work schedules (flex-time, compressed work weeks, telecommuting, job sharing, and part time employment)
- Leaves (paid and unpaid family care leaves, maternity phase-back, and so on)

Corporate America's growing concern for family issues is evidenced by the number of business journals that identify and rank family-friendly corporations. Working Mother was the first periodical to write a lead story on family-friendly companies. This article has appeared annually since 1986 and is called "Best Companies for Working Mothers." It identifies the top 100 work-life sensitive companies, assessing compensation, opportunities for women, child-care benefits, flexibility in work, and other benefits such as paid maternity and paternity leave. Additionally, Business Week magazine ran its first major cover story on "Work & Family" in 1993 at the time the Family and Medical Leave Act was enacted, and in 1996 Business Week launched in a major cover story issue a biannual ranking of the "Best Companies for Work and Family." Finally, the third major business periodical to rank companies was Fortune. Their "The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America" was first

published in January 1998. Evidence from their study indicated that family-friendly polices help the bottom line.

CONCLUSION

Subsequently, work-life balance can bring a gigantic change at the hierarchical and individual levels. It helps an association to inalienably assemble a solid worth framework, which is ascribed to the work life offset delighted in at the representative level. Subsequently, the association does not need to force a formed skeleton of authoritative qualities in light of the fact that they now get to be characteristic for it. Many experts have given different solutions to this problem are, time management is one of the best solutions which can help to reduce the imbalance between the personal and the work life of the employees. Prioritizing the tasks and planning the activities can help to take out some free time which can be utilized for other purposes, taking some time out for hobbies and leisure activities, spending time with loved ones can help to beat the stress, learn to say "no" if required, sharing the responsibilities will help and don't commit for something which is practically impossible, utilizing the flexible working hours option of the organizations to get some free time.

Balancing is a most important part for all the employees. A healthy balance between work and home should be a priority for everyone. Implementing proper work-life balance offers many important benefits. There are, however, many hazards linked with an unbalanced work and home life.

REFERENCES

[1] Caspar, Wendy J., and Louis C. Buffardi. "Work-Life Benefits and Job Pursuit Intentions: The Role of Anticipated Organizational Support." *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 65* (2004): 391–410.

[2] Gomez-Mejia, Luis R., David B. Balkin, and Robert L. Cardy. *"Managing Human Resources"*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004.

[3] Grover, S.L., and K.J. Crooker. "Who Appreciates Family-Responsive Human Resource Policies: The Impact of Family-Friendly Policies on the Organizational Attachment of Parents and Non-Parents?" *Personnel Psychology 48,* no. 2 (Summer 1995): 271–288.

[4] Hammers, Maryann. "A Family-Friendly' Backlash". *Workforce Management*, August 2003, 77–79.

[5] Kiger, Patrick. "Child-Care Models." *Workforce Management*, April 2004, 38.

[6] Making Work Flexible: Policy to Practice. New York: Catalyst, 1996.

[7] Mercer *"Work/Life and Diversity Initiatives Benchmarking Survey 1996"*. Louisville, KY: William M. Mercer Inc., 1996.

[8] Nilles, J.M. *"Managing Telework: Strategies for Managing the Virtual Workforce"*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998.

[9] Osterman, P. *"Work/Family Programs and the Employment Relationship."* Administrative Science Quarterly, December 1995, 681.

[10] Scott, M.B. "Flexibility Improves Workplace at Owens Corning, Dun & Bradstreet Information Systems." *Employee Benefit Plan Review,* September 1996, 30–31.

[11] Seitel, S. *"Work & Family: A Retrospective Research and Results from 1990 to 1995".* Minnetonka, MN: Work & Family Connection, Inc., 1997.

[12] Waldfogel, J. *"Family and Medical Leave: Evidence from the 2000 Surveys."* Monthly Labor Review, September 2001.